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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0404  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 6271  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0367  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1512  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4291  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5565  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0302  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001389

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DEPT FOR PRM AND SCA/INS, DHS FOR CIS, BANGKOK FOR DHS/CIS  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [NP](#) [BT](#)

SUBJECT: GON OFFERS ENCOURAGEMENT ON CAMP SECURITY AND  
OTHER ARRANGEMENTS FOR BHUTANESE REFUGEE PROCESSING

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1376

- [1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1328
- [1](#)C. KATHMANDU 1320
- [1](#)D. KATHMANDU 1227

Sensitive but Unclassified - Please Handle Accordingly

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Government of Nepal (GON) officials advised refcoord July 19 and 20 that the MOU between the GON and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) should be signed within two weeks; that the GON is fully committed to establishing security in the Bhutanese refugee camps and that there is no need for UNHCR and Core Group countries to reiterate the need for this; that the Jhapa Chief District Officer will announce the GON policy allowing third-country resettlement in the refugee camps at an opportune time;8 and that the Home Affairs Ministry will consider U.S. arguments that the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) operated for the U.S. by IOM should be located in Damak. A July 11 letter from UNCHR Representative Abraham Abraham reiterating the need for camp security was perceived by GON officials as being excessively strident in tone, and could have undermined UNHCR,s working relationship with the government. The difficulty for the GON in allocating additional security resources to the refugee camps should not be underestimated, but it appears the government is fully committed to doing it. It just might take more time than is ideal. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Refcoord met July 19 with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Joint Secretary Dinesh Bhattarai and July 20 with Ministry of Home Affairs Under Secretary (Local Administration) Shankar Koirala to discuss progress by the Government of Nepal (GON) in overcoming obstacles to Bhutanese refugee resettlement processing (Ref A). Topics discussed included IOM,s difficulty in concluding an MOU

with the GON, establishing security in the Bhutanese refugee camps, the timing of GON and UNHCR information campaigns in the camps, and the importance of locating the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) in Damak (near the camps) rather than in Bhadrapur as recommended by the Damak Chief District Officer (CDO).

#### IOM-GON MOU Ready in Two Weeks?

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13. (SBU) Joint Secretary Bhattarai advised that the inter-ministerial consultations on the draft MOU between IOM and the GON are near completion, and could be ready for signature in about two weeks. He said it has been resolved that the MFA will sign the MOU on behalf of the GON, but that there are still (unspecified) questions to be resolved regarding IOM's privileges and immunities. He said the draft MOU should be ready for IOM review in about one more week. (IOM's working level contacts predicted that the MOU might be signed within a week.) Refcoord reminded Bhattarai that IOM needed to begin setting up the OPE for Bhutanese refugee resettlement processing immediately if the U.S. was to be ready to act on UNHCR referrals expected in September. He noted that IOM, without an MOU in force, was unable to lease a processing site, procure equipment, or engage local staff. The U.S. objective, refcoord said, was to have the OPE operational before the end of August. Bhattarai said the MFA would push the process along as well as it could, but that the inter-ministerial review must run its course.

#### No Need To Hector Us about Camp Security, Says GON

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14. (SBU) Both Bhattarai and Home Affairs Under Secretary Koirala asserted that the GON is fully committed to

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establishing security in the camps so that resettlement processing can proceed, but that it is constrained by a lack of resources from moving as quickly as it would like. They both made it clear that GON officials had greatly resented the tone of UNHCR Representative Abraham Abraham's July 11 letter (Ref A, para 4), in which Abraham had suggested that donor and resettlement countries might withdraw their support if security in the camps was not restored soon. In measured tones, Bhattarai declared that it is the GON policy to allow Bhutanese refugees the option of resettlement, that the GON understands very well that it must establish security in the camps for this to take place, that it is doing the best it can, and that it is not necessary for UNHCR or the Core Group to continue reiterating the need for GON action.

15. (SBU) Koirala commented that the security situation in the Terai region, including Jhapa District where the seven refugee camps are located, is especially tense and that the security forces are already spread very thin. He noted that for additional police forces to be assigned to Jhapa District, they would have to be redeployed from some other location where they are also critically needed, and that resistance to this can be expected from the affected jurisdictions. (Note: the camp security plan is to assign 20 armed police and 5 regular police to each camp, on a 24-hour basis.) Nevertheless, Koirala said, the police will be redeployed--it just may take a little longer than would be ideal. Bhattarai commented that providing security for the November 22 Constituent Assembly election had been given precedence over all other security concerns, with the sole exception that establishing security in the Bhutanese refugee camps will not be delayed.

#### Waiting & Opportune Moment To Announce Policy to Refugees

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16. (SBU) Regarding the need for the GON to minimize confusion in the camps by informing the refugees of the new policy allowing resettlement, Bhattarai commented that the Jhapa CDO is awaiting the & opportune moment to convey this information to the camp populations. This will probably be contingent on the redeployment of additional police to Jhapa

District and to the camps. Once this has been done, UNHCR will be able to begin its own information campaign. Both Bhattarai and Koirala stressed again that the situation both in the camps and in the surrounding Jhapa district is very volatile, and that the government is reluctant to risk provoking disturbances.

#### CDO Still Pressing for OPE To Be in Damak

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17. (SBU) Having heard that the Damak CDO was continuing to press for the OPE to be located in Bhadrapur rather than Damak, refcoord reminded Koirala again that it is essential that the U.S. resettlement operation be based in Damak, close to the UNHCR sub-office and the largest refugee camps. He briefed Koirala on steps taken and envisioned over the next few weeks to establish the OPE there. Koirala agreed that U.S. logistical and security arguments favoring locating the OPE in Damak were persuasive, and that he would present the U.S. position in discussions within the Home Affairs Ministry. He warned, however, that the Damak CDO will have significant influence on this point, and may not agree to the OPE opening for business in Damak until additional police forces are assigned to the district. Refcoord suggested that he and local IOM representative David Derthick could meet with the CDO on July 25 to discuss his concerns. Koirala is to consult within the Ministry and advise us on this.

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#### Comment

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18. (SBU) UNHCR's effectiveness in promoting third-country resettlement as an option for Bhutanese refugees could have been undermined by Abraham Abraham's July 11 letter. Policy and working level officials in the MFA and Ministry of Home Affairs appear to be extremely resentful of the letter's tone. Koirala, perhaps the most key GON official dealing with refugee affairs, went so far as to say that after reading the letter he was not sure he could work any longer with the UNHCR office. Both he and MFA Joint Secretary Bhattarai stressed that implementing a resettlement option for Bhutanese refugees was a GON policy to be developed in coordination with the U.S. and other resettlement countries, and not with UNHCR. Both officials emphasized, however, that they understood that the Abraham letter was not sent in coordination with the U.S. or Core Group, and that the GON looked forward to working with the resettlement countries on Bhutanese resettlement. Refcoord noted that UNHCR must continue to play an integral part in the resettlement process. While post can understand the GON officials' ire at the tone of the UNHCR letter, we appreciate its goal of encouraging GON attention to the Bhutanese refugee issue.

19. (SBU) Concerns expressed by GON officials concerning the volatility of the security situation both in the Bhutanese refugee camps and in the surrounding Terai region are well founded. Hardly a day goes by without reports of strikes and violent attacks by the various dissident and separatist groups throughout the region, including in Jhapa District. For example, in the last week, village and district officials in the Terai who are not of local origin were threatened with violence if they don't abandon their positions. The security forces are already incapable of dealing with the violence in the region, and will be hard pressed to provide additional security to the refugee camps and to resettlement country operations as well. Even so, MFA and Home Affairs Ministry officials expressed their commitment to push ahead with security support for refugee resettlement even as the November 22 election approaches. For now, we are accepting this commitment at face value and are cautiously optimistic that the remaining obstacles to resettlement processing can be overcome fairly soon.

HUGINS